United Nations

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/1058
15 January 1992

W E D N E S D A Y H I G H L I G H T S

- Secretary-General, addressing Palestinian Rights Committee, stresses Israel's responsibility to protect civilians under the 1949 Geneva Convention.

- United Nations military liaison officers, drawn from three existing peace-keeping operations, begin deployment to Yugoslavia.

- World Food Programme begins emergency food aid to refugees in Yemen.

- Parties to anti-racism convention approve draft which would have General Assembly amend instrument to ensure funding for monitoring committee.

* * *

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali addressed this morning the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, saying that a just and lasting settlement of the Palestine question must address the status of Jerusalem.

He stressed Israel's responsibility to protect the Palestinians under the 1949 Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, adding that current negotiations between the parties were based on Security Council resolution 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). By those resolutions the Council called on Israel to withdraw its forces from the territories occupied in the 1967 conflict.

The Secretary-General went on to say that the Security Council had expressed the consensus of the international community with regard to the legal obligations of Israel, as the occupying Power, most recently in resolution 726 (1992), which strongly condemned Israel's decision to resume deportations of Palestinian civilians. The fact that talks were going on between the parties did not detract from Israel's obligations to respect the Convention and abide by the Council's resolutions.

(more)

For information media—not an official record

Also this morning, the Committee elected Keba Birane Cisse of Senegal as Chairman, by acclamation. He announced that he would head the Committee's delegation to the United Nations Asian Regional Seminar on the Question of Palestine, to be held in Nicosia from 20 to 24 January.

* * *

It was announced today at Headquarters that the group of 50 United Nations military liaison officers to promote maintenance of the cease-fire in Yugoslavia had begun deployment to that country yesterday.

The Force, which would reach its full strength in a few days, has been drawn from three existing United Nations peace-keeping operations: the Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) in Jerusalem; the Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission (UNIKOM) and the Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM). The Force is composed of officers from 17 different nations.

Spokesman François Giuliani told correspondents at Headquarters that the mission had been erroneously characterized by the press as a preparatory mission for a United Nations peace-keeping force in Yugoslavia.

He emphasized that the mandate of the mission was to facilitate communication between the parties to the conflict. It was neither an observer mission nor a monitoring mission; furthermore, it did not prejudge the Secretary-General's recommendation on deployment of a peace-keeping force.

In other news today, the Security Council held consultations this afternoon on three separate items: dismantling of the United Nations Observer Group in Central America (ONUCA); request for membership to the United Nations by Kazakhstan; and Libya.

* * *

The World Food Programme (WFP) has announced that it will begin supplying emergency food aid to some 6,000 Ethiopian and Somali refugees who fled into Yemen during 1991 due to ongoing civil war in their countries. With no end to the fighting in sight, the number of refugees requiring emergency food aid is expected to swell.

According to the Programme, the refugees who are currently living in makeshift shelters in Aden, Taiz and Shabwa Province are desperately short of drinking water, building materials and, most importantly, food. The WPF expects the refugees to require emergency food rations for at least six months.

According to the WFP, Yemen has always been a net importer of food; now, however, the country is struggling to cope with a massive influx of its nationals from the Gulf region in the aftermath of the Gulf war and has declared itself unable to sustain the refugee burden any longer.

* * *

(more)

States parties to the Internatinal Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination began today their fourteenth meeting at Headquarters, by adopting a draft text which would have the General Assembly decide to amend the Convention in order to ensure that its monitoring body -- the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination -- was entirely funded from the United Nations regular budget.

Also by the text, the Assembly would emphasize that the entry into force of the amendments could not be interpreted as relinquishing the obligation of the States parties to meet in full any arrears in payments of their assessed contributions.

The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, with 130 States parties as of 15 January, is the most universally accepted of all the United Nations human rights instruments. It was adopted by the General Assembly in December 1965 and entered into force January 1969.

* *** *